

will be spared the economic hardships that often accompany tragedy.

I ask my colleagues to join me in support of designating September 2004 as "Life Insurance Awareness Month," and I yield back the balance of my time.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 22, 2004*

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, due to a family commitment, I was not present in the chamber on Friday, June 18 to cast my votes on rollcalls 267 through 275. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall 267; "nay" on rollcall 268; "yea" on rollcall 269; "nay" on rollcall 270; "yea" on rollcall 271; "yea" on rollcall 272; "yea" on rollcall 273; "yea" on rollcall 274; and "yea" on rollcall 275.

Due to unavoidable travel delays, I was not present in the chamber earlier today to cast my votes on rollcalls 276 through 278. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on each measure.

#### AMERICANS HAVE A RIGHT TO LIVE THEIR LIVES AND MAKE DECISIONS BEST FOR THEM

### HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 22, 2004*

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome all of my sharp, diverse female colleagues who are here tonight to speak on issues that affect women.

Right now, there are a myriad of anti choice legal efforts designed to undermine the basic tenets of Roe v. Wade. Never in my time in Congress have I seen so much misleading legislation geared towards women, court cases that refuse to vindicate our right to privacy, and so many blatant anti choice judicial nominees.

Americans have the right to live their lives and make decisions that are the best for them and their children. We are falling down a slippery slope of having the government dictate our moral, ethical, and private decisions. There is a small, fundamentalist, religious group which is overexerting their influence on the way our government is being run, and we must immediately put a stop to it.

Marian Wright Edelman, the President and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund, said "Justice is not cheap. Justice is not quick. It is not ever finally achieved." Looking out at this room of hopeful faces, I know that Justice can be achieved in our "battle for reproductive freedom" within our lifetime.

I am proud to be at the forefront of this battle, and I want to share some of my insight and strategy aimed at protecting a woman's right to choose.

I joined over a million people who believe that it is time to stand up for women's rights and demand a change in our administration on April 25, 2004 at the March for Women's Lives.

We marched because there is an attempt by our administration to undermine our fundamental rights. Women's health care includes reproductive services, access to contraception, and informed decisions made by individuals about their body, not their government.

My predecessor and longtime role model, Barbara Jordan, once said, "We want to be in control of our lives. Whether we are jungle fighters, craftsmen, company men, gamesmen, we want to be in control. And when the government erodes that control, we are not comfortable." The government is trying to erode that control, and this is something we must come together to prevent.

Right now we have an Administration that actively seeks to undermine a woman's right to choose. They falsely claim to be doing this in the interest of women and children, citing both the mother and child's well being as justifications for their actions. This same Administration has frozen the Title X family-planning program in each budget for the last three years. They have also cut domestic-violence prevention programs and frozen important programs for women and children, including the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, Head Start, and child-nutrition services.

By contrast, they have proposed more than doubling funding for unproven, dangerous "abstinence-only" programs that censor health information from young people—and instead of supporting programs that help women who face violence, they have resorted instead to exploiting the issue for an anti-abortion political base. President Bush signed the so-called "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" with a false claim of being in a woman's best interest. This legislation would, for the first time in federal law, recognize an embryo or fetus as a separate "person" with rights separate from, and equal to, a pregnant woman.

Raising awareness must be a high priority, younger and older generations in America must begin to take this threat very seriously. Our right to chose is at its most precarious point since over 31 years ago, when Roe vs. Wade was decided. Our message will be clear: we will not tolerate the persistent government attacks on women's health and reproductive rights.

I am pleased that for the first time in its 95-year history, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) board of directors unanimously endorsed a pro choice march. The Black Women's Health Imperative has also signed on. These organizations are part of a growing majority that be-

lieve contraceptive education and abortion rights for black and minority women must be a priority. Unintended pregnancy rates for African-American women is almost three times the rate of Caucasian women, maternal mortality is 4 times higher for African-American women than Caucasians. One out of 4 African-American women had less involvement than they would like in decisions effecting their health care, with only 73 percent of African-American women receiving first trimester prenatal care.

By making abortion illegal, we are going to harm those who turn to back alleys and home remedies to "fix" their situation, a scenario faced disproportionately by minorities and the underprivileged. We cannot make abortion inaccessible, illegal, or shameful. We must stand up for women's rights and let them make informed choices.

After the March for Women's Lives, I thought we had begun to get our message across. It seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Last month, the Food and Drug Administration denied the application to make Plan B (emergency contraception) available for sale over-the-counter. This is an unprecedented intrusion of politics into science. Never has an administration so politicized an over the counter application, nor set aside the overwhelming recommendation of its panel of experts. Our administration would rather appeal to the far right than work to reduce the number of abortions. If over-the-counter availability of EC could prevent even ten percent of unintended pregnancies annually, it would result in 150,000 fewer abortions per year.

This decision stands in direct opposition to the administration's stated goal of reducing the number of abortions. Emergency Contraception is not an abortion. It is simply concentrated doses of the regular birth-control pill, taken soon after sex in order to prevent pregnancy. Emergency Contraception is not the same as RU 486, which terminates an already-established pregnancy. EC is safe and effective, and is not harmful if taken after a pregnancy has been established.

Over-the-counter sales would be particularly beneficial for sexual assault victims. According to scientific studies, approximately 25,000 women per year in the United States become pregnant as a result of rape. An estimated 22,00 of these pregnancies—or 88 percent—could be prevented if sexual assault victims had timely access to emergency contraception.

I hope that all of you are willing to take the step and be the voice to fight against this slippery slope. The battle for reproductive freedom is far from over. I want to close with a quote from one of our truly great female leaders, Susan B. Anthony, "Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights, and nothing less."